

CITY OF CHICAGO TO HAVE CHILDREN'S DENTAL INFIRMARY

By **WILLIAM HALE THOMPSON, Mayor, Chicago, Illinois**

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AN INVITATION has been extended to me by the president and secretary of the American Dental Association to present a statement of the proposed plan for building and maintaining a dental infirmary for the care of children's teeth in the city of Chicago. Permit me first to express my appreciation of the compliment implied by this invitation, and to thank your officers for the courtesy of the privilege of appearing before you. That I cannot do so in person is to me a source of keen regret, a regret tempered only by the fact that even in my absence you are good enough to set aside a few minutes of your valuable time to listen to a plan which I confidently believe is destined to help to solve the very serious problem of caring for the dental needs of the great army of children who today are practically neglected in most of our large cities.

It is true that Boston has her Forsyth, and Rochester has her Eastman, while various other cities are proceeding in a more or less tentative manner to meet the situation. All of these efforts are laudable, and all are producing results. No commendation is too great for such splendid men as the Forsyth Brothers, and Mr. Eastman, nor for the self-sacrificing efforts that have been put forth by many worthy men in other sections for the amelioration of the sufferings of children from diseased teeth.

But what Chicago proposes to do is something different. It is our plan to

collect from the community the necessary funds to establish and permanently maintain community dental service, and it is to be done in such a way that the community will be benefitted at the time of giving the money, as well as at the time of receiving the service.

In 1921, as mayor of Chicago, I conceived the idea of organizing what was termed a Pageant of Progress, to illustrate the advancement being made in the various arts, sciences and industries, whereby the people could be educated as to the development going on in the various activities of life, and thus stimulate to renewed interest in those things which make for their material welfare. The history of this Pageant is too long for recital here, but suffice it to say that it proved an overwhelming success, not only in its educational values, but in the financial returns after all expenses were paid. The amount in the treasury today is approximately \$150,000.00. In the furtherance of this project I had the hearty co-operation of many worthy citizens of Chicago, notably Mr. D. F. Kelly, of Mandel Brothers, who is treasurer of the Pageant of Progress, Dr. John Dill Robertson, who was then commissioner of health, and many others. Owing to the manifold duties which devolved on me as mayor, and for other reasons, I felt obliged to give up the active management of the Pageant after the first year, and induced Dr. Robertson to take over the

work. This he consented to do and subsequently resigned from the health office.

Through this medium we are raising money from the community, at the same time that we are doing the community good; and the next consideration is how this money is to be expended for the benefit of this same community or for those most vitally in need of assistance.

It was Dr. Robertson's idea to build a suitable building in Chicago for the double purpose of housing a training school for home and public health nursing, and for the establishment of a dental infirmary for the care of the teeth of the needy.

In May, 1922, Dr. Robertson and I visited the Forsyth Dental Infirmary in Boston, and I became so impressed with what was being done for the dental needs of the children of that city, that I at once declared that we would come back to Chicago and *out-Forsyth Forsyth!*

A meeting was accordingly called the evening of June 6, at which there were present many of the representative dentists, physicians, and nurses; and when I had outlined our plans for this great institution the idea met with such a hearty and spontaneous endorsement on the part of those present, that I felt encouraged to venture the prediction that ground would be broken for the building not later than October of this year.

Briefly stated, our plans for financing this splendid philanthropy are to hold a Pageant of Progress each year with the positive assurance based on past experience, and the most conservative estimates for the future, that ample funds will be available for the maintenance, on a permanent basis of one of the best institutions of the kind in the world.

Thus it will be seen that while private magnanimity has inaugurated in other

cities a most commendable movement for the alleviation of suffering among the children, it remain for Chicago to evolve a plan whereby the community itself provides the means, and does it in such a delightful way that it becomes a pleasure instead of a burden.

Mr. President, I commend to your consideration what we are pleased to call the Chicago idea for community dental service, and I bespeak for this movement the co-operative interest of every member of your splendid society. I thank you, sir, on behalf of the citizenship of Chicago for the spontaneous courtesy which prompted you to extend to me the invitation to appear before your Association on this occasion, and I am deeply grateful to your members for their consideration in so cordially accepting as a speaker one who is not a member of your organization.

May I also add that it is my earnest hope that some day in the future, when we have our institution in efficient working order, you will do us the honor to accept an invitation to hold your meeting in Chicago so that you may observe at first hand the practical operation of what today is our enthusiastic vision, and be able thereby to offer us suggestions, wherein we may improve this service to our children and bring it to the utmost point of perfection.

I realize better than most men the necessity of co-operation, and I am frank to admit that I do not believe that this movement can achieve the greatest measure of success without the endorsement and the active aid of the dental profession. We invite this aid in the fullest sense of the term, and be assured that with this idea in view as well as our general reputation for hospitality, you will always receive a hearty welcome whenever you may find it feasible to hold your meeting in the city of Chicago.